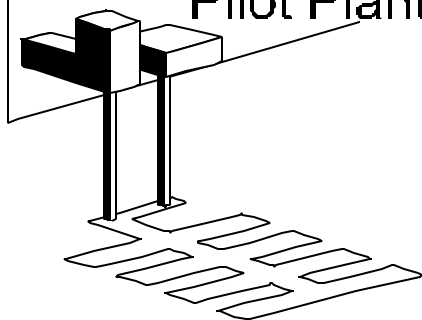


Waste Isolation Pilot Plant



DOE Proposes to Modify the Audit and Surveillance Program For Waste Characterized at WIPP

Summary and background

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has proposed a modification to its Hazardous Waste Facility Permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) that would support establishment of a centralized waste characterization facility at WIPP. The proposal requests – for transuranic waste characterized at WIPP – that DOE's in-house, New Mexico Environment Department (NMED)-regulated assessment program be substituted for the current audit and surveillance program. This proposed change, which DOE submitted to the NMED on July 24, 2000, will not adversely affect worker safety, human health, or the environment. The NMED issued the Permit in October 1999.

The intent of the current audit and surveillance program is to ensure transuranic waste sites have implemented and comply with the WIPP Waste Analysis Plan (WAP). Specifically, the WAP establishes requirements for the sites' waste characterization activities.

What is Proposed?

The audit and surveillance program was established so that NMED could indirectly oversee compliance with the WAP at sites located outside of New Mexico. Since the WIPP facility is already under the regulatory authority of NMED, the need for a separate audit program to ensure compliance with the WAP is not necessary for waste characterized at WIPP.

DOE will develop a quality assurance project plan to ensure data generated during waste characterization at WIPP meets regulatory requirements for disposal. Additionally, WIPP will undergo independent procedural and operations assessments in accordance with the quality assurance project plan. These assessments will achieve the same objectives as the current audit and surveillance program.

What is Waste Characterization?

Waste characterization is the process to identify and describe the physical, chemical, and radiological properties of transuranic waste. DOE uses this information to determine whether the waste meets regulatory requirements for disposal at WIPP.

This level of scrutiny will ensure that data generated at WIPP complies with the stringent WAP. Records of these activities will be maintained at WIPP and are available for inspection by NMED at any time. Hazardous waste activities performed at WIPP are under the direct regulatory purview of NMED.

***For more
Information***

For more information about transuranic waste disposal, or to be placed on the WIPP mailing list, call the WIPP Information Center at 1-800-336-WIPP (9477). Or you may visit the WIPP Home Page at www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us. If you prefer, write to:

WIPP Information Center
U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Area Office
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U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Area Office
The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant